A Home for Endocrine Surgery Research

The past 2 decades have witnessed steady growth in the role otolaryngology–head and neck surgery plays in the management of patients with thyroid and parathyroid disorders. Historically, the care of these patients was largely provided by endocrinologists working in concert with general surgeons. However, as head and neck surgery became a core component of their practice and training, it was predictable that thyroid and parathyroid diseases would become incorporated into the practices of otolaryngologists.1,2

Both general otolaryngologists and fellowship-trained head and neck surgeons routinely manage these diseases as a component of their practices. However, for some otolaryngologists, these endocrine diseases have now become the exclusive focus of their clinical and research efforts. A number of recent developments reflect the mounting importance of thyroid and parathyroid diseases in otolaryngology, as well as the emergence of endocrine surgery as a distinct discipline within the field. Endocrine surgery is now its own track in the educational and research offerings at the American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery Foundation’s (AAO-HNSF’s) annual meeting. Several years ago, the American Head and Neck Society (AHNS) endorsed the first endocrine surgery-only, head and neck fellowships. This was followed by the recent establishment of a dedicated Endocrine Surgery Section within the AHSN.

The increasing prominence of endocrine surgery in otolaryngology has also reached the pages of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery. This year, an associate editor position was created to oversee a discrete endocrine surgery section. I am humbled to have been invited to serve in this capacity.

The goal of creating this specialized section and editorial position was to expand the journal’s efforts to provide its readers with the most relevant and cutting-edge research related to thyroid and parathyroid diseases. Studies published in the journal should equip clinicians with information that will enhance the care of their patients. These publications will also spur new research ideas and efforts.

To be able to provide these types of studies, the journal encourages clinicians and researchers of any training background to submit their high-quality endocrine manuscripts. As the journal of the AAO-HNSF, it is natural that otolaryngologists will consider it when deliberating where to publish their research. This is important, as they are particularly well equipped to conduct research in this discipline given their expertise in voice and laryngeal function, nerve monitoring, and neck anatomy and surgery. I urge otolaryngologists to continue to submit and publish their endocrine-related research in Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery.

Critically, though, like many fields of medicine, optimal care for thyroid and parathyroid diseases is provided in a multidisciplinary manner. Patients with endocrine diseases are often assessed and treated by physicians with many different backgrounds—endocrinology, radiology, pathology, general surgery, endocrine surgery, surgical oncology, otolaryngology, and nuclear medicine. Physicians and researchers from all of these fields frequently generate essential research discoveries on these diseases, and these studies are often published in their specialty-specific journals.

This approach may limit the impact and exposure of important findings to a narrow group of readers. While certain organizations, such as the American Thyroid Association or American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists, and selected conferences, like the World Congress on Thyroid Cancer, foster cross-disciplinary interactions, many physicians tend to function in specialty silos, with restricted exposure to other disciplines. All of us, particularly our patients, would benefit from greater interchange and cross-pollination.

For this reason, I encourage authors from all disciplines conducting thyroid- and parathyroid-related research to consider publishing in Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery. This would provide dual benefits. Readers of the journal would become acquainted with research and researchers from other specialties. For authors, it would offer a new, wider audience for their important work. Ultimately, these will both lead to improved patient care and foster new research endeavors.

We look forward to offering authors and readers a platform for innovative and impactful thyroid and parathyroid research.

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References

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